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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of the fourth annual National Student Satisfaction Study, which examines the areas of campus life of highest importance to students, the areas of greatest and least satisfaction, and the greatest performance gaps between levels of importance and satisfaction. Data were collected from 524 colleges and universities that used the Student Satisfaction Inventory with all or part of their student body. The inventory asks students to rate on a scale of 1-7 the level of importance they assign to the expectation as well as their level of satisfaction that the expectation is being met of various elements of their college experiences. The inventory findings are presented with three scores for each item: an importance score, a satisfaction score, and a performance gap score calculated by subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score. Analyses of the 1997 responses are presented for each item and for each of the four types of institution covered by the study: four-year public; four-year private; community, junior, and technical college; and career and private schools. Additionally, three-year trends (1994-1997) for all score types are included for four-year public and private institutions and two-year institutions. (MAB)

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ED 421 931

1997

# National Student Satisfaction Report

**Summary data from 524 colleges and universities identifying:**

- Students' priorities for their campus experience
- Gaps between student expectations and campus performance
- Distinct differences between two-year and four-year institutions

USA Group
Noel-Levitz, Inc.

1

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**Includes new companion study — see inside!**

USAGroup Noel-Levitz

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# 1997 National Student Satisfaction Report

## Noel-Levitz National Center for Student Retention

### Rationale for Satisfaction Measurement

Student satisfaction studies are self-examinations that enable institutions to measure their students' satisfaction with a wide range of college experiences. By taking "soundings" of student satisfaction, institutions are able to pinpoint their institutional strengths as well as areas in need of improvement.

Traditionally, colleges and universities have measured one dimension of student satisfaction only. However, for greatest impact and accuracy, satisfaction should be viewed within the context of student expectations (levels of importance). For example, the availability of parking and the quality of food service repeatedly surface as areas of high dissatisfaction to students. But when asked to indicate the importance of these areas in their overall educational experience, students rate parking and food service relatively low.

### The Study

This report reveals the results of the fourth annual National Student Satisfaction Study conducted by USA Group Noel-Levitz to determine the areas of highest importance to students, the areas of greatest and least satisfaction, and the greatest performance gaps between levels of importance and levels of satisfaction. This two-dimensional approach uses the Student Satisfaction Inventory™ to identify student concerns that are truly affecting student success. By revealing which aspects of campus students consider most and least important, along with how satisfied students are, this inventory provides a vehicle for institutions to set priorities that are *closely aligned* with those of their students.

**New companion study**

**See the final section of this report for a new study that reveals institutional priorities from the perspective of faculty, staff, and administrators.**

- **pilot study for a new assessment instrument**
- **results from 80 institutions**
- **additional context for understanding student perceptions**

### The Source of Data

The 1997 National Student Satisfaction Report represents data from 524 colleges and universities representing four-year public, four-year private, two-year community, junior and technical institutions, and career and private schools that utilized the Student Satisfaction Inventory with all or part of their student body. The student populations by institutional type include 76,161 from four-year publics; 106,837 from four-year privates; 90,758 from two-year community, junior, and technical colleges; and 18,377 from career and private schools.

### The Instrument

The Student Satisfaction Inventory, from which the data were collected for this report, consists of over 70 items that cover the full range of college experiences. Each item is expressed as a statement of expectation. Each statement includes a rating scale of 1 to 7. Students are asked to rate the level of importance they assign to the expectation as well as their level of satisfaction that the expectation is being met.

The inventory findings are then presented with three scores for each item: an importance score, a satisfaction score, and a performance gap score, which is calculated by subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score. A large performance gap score on an item indicates that the institution is not meeting the expectation; a small gap score indicates that the institution is close to meeting the expectation; and a negative gap score indicates that the institution is exceeding the students' expectations.

The Student Satisfaction Inventory comes in three versions: one for four-year institutions; one for community, junior, and technical colleges, and another for career and private schools. A sample of the SSI items representing a broad array of issues relating to campus programs and services is presented at the end of this report.



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## What Expectations Are Most Important to Students?

Students were asked to rate the level of importance of each statement of expectation by responding to the question "How important is it to you that your institution meet this expectation?" Responses reflect how strongly students felt about the statement, with higher scores reflecting greater student expectations.

The statements of expectation rated as most important by students in the national sample of 524 institutions were as follows:

### Expectations of Greatest Importance to Students

**Four-Year Private Institutions**

1. The content of the courses within my major is valuable.
2. The instruction in my major field is excellent.
3. Nearly all faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
4. The quality of instruction in most classes is excellent.
5. I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.

**Four-Year Public Institutions**

1. The content of the courses within my major is valuable.
2. The instruction in my major field is excellent.
3. I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
4. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
5. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.

**Community, Junior and Technical Colleges**

1. The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
2. Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.
3. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
4. I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
5. There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.

**Career and Private Schools**

1. Factor to enroll: Future employment opportunities
2. The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
3. Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.
4. The quality of instruction in the academic programs is excellent.
5. Adequate financial aid is available for most students.

## What Expectations Are Most Satisfying to Students?

Students were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with each statement of expectation by responding to the question "How satisfied are you that your institution has met this expectation?" Responses reflected the degree to which students felt their institution was meeting the expectation, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of student satisfaction.

The statements of expectation rated as most satisfying by students in the national sample of 524 institutions were as follows:

### Expectations with Highest Satisfaction

**Four-Year Private Institutions**

1. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
2. Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
3. This institution has a good reputation within the community.
4. My academic advisor is approachable.
5. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.

**Four-Year Public Institutions**

1. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
2. On the whole, the campus is well maintained.
3. Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
4. I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
5. My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.

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**Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges**

1. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
2. The quality of instruction in most classes is excellent.
3. On the whole, the campus is well maintained.
4. I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
5. Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.

**Career and Private Schools**

1. Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.
2. The personnel involved in registration are helpful.
3. Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
4. The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
5. My academic advisor is approachable.

## Where Are Campuses Failing to Meet Students' Expectations?

Performance gap takes into consideration both the importance score and the satisfaction score by generating a discrepancy score. When the student's level of satisfaction (*satisfaction score*) is subtracted from the strength of the student's expectation (*importance score*), the result is a performance gap (*unmet expectation*). A large performance gap score for an item indicates that the institution is not meeting students' expectations. A negative gap score indicates that an institution is exceeding students' expectations for that item.

The statements of expectation with the largest performance gaps as rated by students in the national sample of 524 institutions are listed at right. In addition, the importance scores and the corresponding satisfaction scores are presented below the statements to illustrate the merit of a two-dimensional approach to studying the satisfaction levels of students. *Note:* Performance gaps should be considered within the context of importance scores.

### Expectations With Greatest Performance Gaps

**Four-Year Private Institutions**

1. The amount of student parking on campus is adequate. *(importance 5.85 - satisfaction 3.60)*
2. There is an adequate selection of food available in the cafeteria. *(importance 5.96 - satisfaction 3.87)*
3. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment. *(importance 6.46 - satisfaction 4.65)*
4. Living conditions in the residence halls are comfortable. *(importance 6.13 - satisfaction 4.33)*
5. Adequate financial aid is available for most students. *(importance 6.38 - satisfaction 4.61)*

**Four-Year Public Institutions**

1. The amount of student parking on campus is adequate. *(importance 6.19 - satisfaction 2.96)*
2. I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus. *(importance 6.20 - satisfaction 4.00)*
3. I am able to register for the classes I need with few conflicts. *(importance 6.54 - satisfaction 4.48)*
4. Adequate financial aid is available for most students. *(importance 6.23 - satisfaction 4.26)*
5. Student activity fees are put to good use. *(importance 6.01 - satisfaction 4.08)*

**Community, Junior and Technical Colleges**

1. The amount of student parking on campus is adequate. *(importance 6.12 - satisfaction 4.22)*
2. Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. *(importance 6.14 - satisfaction 4.76)*
3. Financial aid awards are announced to students in time to be helpful in college planning. *(importance 5.94 - satisfaction 4.60)*
4. Students are notified early in the term if they are doing poorly in a class. *(importance 6.16 - satisfaction 4.87)*
5. Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available. *(importance 5.91 - satisfaction 4.65)*



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Career and Private Schools

1. Parking lots are well-lighted and secure. *(importance 6.07 - satisfaction 4.43)*
2. The equipment in the lab facilities is kept up to date. *(importance 6.30 - satisfaction 4.67)*
3. There are a sufficient number of study areas available. *(importance 5.78 - satisfaction 4.26)*
4. Library resources and services are adequate. *(importance 5.95 - satisfaction 4.44)*
5. The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate. *(importance 6.02 - satisfaction 4.51)*

## The Scales

Findings from the Student Satisfaction Inventory were compared to national standards on composite scales by institutional type in the following areas.

- ***Academic Advising Effectiveness** (four-year schools) **and Academic Advising and Counseling Effectiveness** (two-year and career/private schools)* assess the comprehensiveness of the academic advising program, evaluating advisors' knowledge, competence, approachability, and personal concern for students.
- ***Academic Services** (two-year and career/private schools)* assesses services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include the library, computer labs, tutoring and study areas.
- ***Campus Climate*** measures the extent to which the institution provides experiences that promote a sense of campus pride and belonging.
- ***Campus Life** (four-year schools)* assesses the effectiveness of student life programs offered by the institution, covering issues ranging from athletics to residence life. This scale also assesses campus policies and procedures to determine students' perceptions of their rights and responsibilities.
- ***Concern for the Individual*** assesses your commitment to treating each student as an individual. Included in this assessment are those groups who frequently deal with students on a personal level (e.g., faculty, advisors, counselors, residence hall staff).
- ***Instructional Effectiveness*** measures students' academic experience, the curriculum, and the campus's overriding commitment to academic excellence.
- ***Recruitment and Financial Aid Effectiveness** (four-year schools) **and Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness** (two-year and career/private schools)* measure the extent to which admissions counselors are competent and knowledgeable, along with students' perceptions of the effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs.
- ***Registration Effectiveness*** assesses issues associated with registration and billing and the extent to which the registration process is smooth and effective.
- ***Responsiveness to Diverse Populations*** assesses the institution's commitment to specific groups of students enrolled at the institution, e.g. underrepresented populations, students with disabilities, commuters, part-time students, and older, returning learners.
- ***Safety and Security*** measures the institution's responsiveness to students' personal safety and security on the campus.
- ***Service Excellence*** measures the areas of campus where quality service and personal concern for students are rated most and least favorably.
- ***Student Centeredness*** measures the institution's attitude toward students and the extent to which they feel welcome and valued.
- ***Support Services*** assesses the quality of support programs and services.

### Analysis of the Scales

The scales provide a more global view of the institutions by grouping items statistically and conceptually into 12 key areas. The following four tables summarize the importance, satisfaction, and performance gap findings for the 12 scales by institution type.



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## 1997 Scales: *four-year private institutions*

| Scale | Importance Mean | Satisfaction Mean | *Performance Gap Mean* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Advising | 6.31 | 5.31 | *1.00* |
| Campus Climate | 6.17 | 5.08 | *1.09* |
| Campus Life | 5.72 | 4.69 | *1.03* |
| Campus Support Services | 6.02 | 5.00 | *1.02* |
| Concern for the Individual | 6.17 | 5.12 | *1.05* |
| Instructional Effectiveness | 6.35 | 5.27 | *1.08* |
| Recruitment and Financial Aid | 6.11 | 4.82 | *1.29* |
| Registration Effectiveness | 6.12 | 4.91 | *1.21* |
| Responsiveness to Diverse Populations | — | 4.89 | — |
| Safety and Security | 6.16 | 4.56 | *1.60* |
| Service Excellence | 6.03 | 4.94 | *1.09* |
| Student Centeredness | 6.18 | 5.10 | *1.00* |

(7 = very important / very satisfied 1 = not important / not satisfied at all)

## 1997 Scales: *four-year public institutions*

| Scale | Importance Mean | Satisfaction Mean | *Performance Gap Mean* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Advising | 6.30 | 4.95 | *1.35* |
| Campus Climate | 6.03 | 4.74 | *1.29* |
| Campus Life | 5.51 | 4.57 | *0.94* |
| Campus Support Services | 6.03 | 4.88 | *1.15* |
| Concern for the Individual | 6.05 | 4.64 | *1.41* |
| Instructional Effectiveness | 6.31 | 4.99 | *1.32* |
| Recruitment and Financial Aid | 5.99 | 4.48 | *1.51* |
| Registration Effectiveness | 6.16 | 4.67 | *1.49* |
| Responsiveness to Diverse Populations | — | 4.86 | — |
| Safety and Security | 6.26 | 4.28 | *1.98* |
| Service Excellence | 5.98 | 4.60 | *1.38* |
| Student Centeredness | 6.00 | 4.76 | *1.24* |

(7 = very important / very satisfied 1 = not important / not satisfied at all)



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## 1997 Scales: *community, junior, and technical colleges*

| Scale | Importance Mean | Satisfaction Mean | *Performance Gap Mean* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Advising / Counseling | 6.11 | 5.05 | *1.06* |
| Academic Services | 6.01 | 5.04 | *0.97* |
| Admissions and Financial Aid | 5.98 | 4.92 | *1.06* |
| Campus Climate | 5.94 | 5.09 | *0.85* |
| Campus Support Services | 5.40 | 4.73 | *0.67* |
| Concern for the Individual | 6.09 | 5.06 | *1.03* |
| Instructional Effectiveness | 6.18 | 5.25 | *0.93* |
| Registration Effectiveness | 6.13 | 5.23 | *0.90* |
| Responsiveness to Diverse Populations | — | 5.29 | — |
| Safety and Security | 5.96 | 4.70 | *1.26* |
| Service Excellence | 5.91 | 5.02 | *0.89* |
| Student Centeredness | 5.93 | 5.16 | *0.77* |

(7 = very important / very satisfied 1 = not important / not satisfied at all)

## 1997 Scales: *career and private schools*

| Scale | Importance Mean | Satisfaction Mean | *Performance Gap Mean* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Advising / Counseling | 6.10 | 5.04 | *1.06* |
| Academic Services | 5.98 | 4.61 | *1.37* |
| Admissions and Financial Aid | 6.13 | 5.08 | *1.05* |
| Campus Climate | 6.05 | 5.08 | *0.97* |
| Campus Support Services | 5.56 | 4.65 | *0.91* |
| Concern for the Individual | 6.14 | 5.03 | *1.11* |
| Instructional Effectiveness | 6.20 | 5.20 | *1.00* |
| Registration Effectiveness | 6.12 | 5.21 | *0.91* |
| Responsiveness to Diverse Populations | — | 5.20 | — |
| Safety and Security | 5.90 | 4.57 | *1.33* |
| Service Excellence | 5.94 | 4.94 | *1.00* |
| Student Centeredness | 6.03 | 5.16 | *0.87* |

(7 = very important / very satisfied 1 = not important / not satisfied at all)

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## Analysis

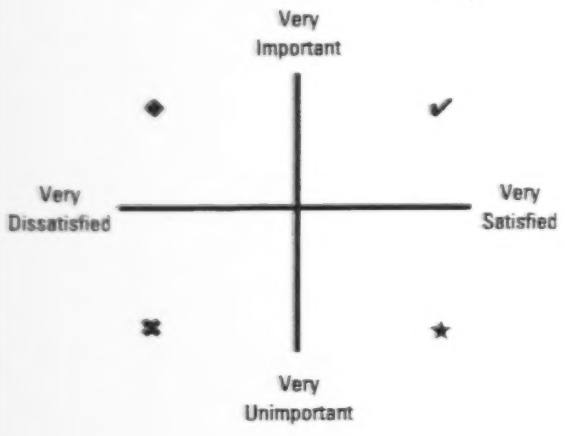
It is important that the analysis of the data include all three areas of measurement — importance, satisfaction, and performance gap. Focusing on only one area, such as performance gap, is likely to result in overlooking areas of the campus experience that students value most. A combination of scores provides the most dynamic information for institutions to consider when developing an action agenda.

Using the matrix below permits the institution to conceptualize its student satisfaction data by retention priorities and marketing opportunities. In addition, it allows the institution to pinpoint areas where resources can be redirected from areas of low importance to areas of high importance.

## Trend Analysis

The composite scales were analyzed to determine trends in importance, satisfaction and performance gap across three years of data. The comparisons on the following pages are presented separately by institutional type: four-year private, four-year public, and two-year community, junior, and technical institutions. Trend data are not provided for career and private schools because the career and private version of the SSI debuted in 1997. The data have been isolated by academic year, rather than presented cumulatively.

### Matrix for Prioritizing Action




◆ **High importance / low satisfaction**
pinpoints areas that should claim the institution's immediate attention, i.e. retention agenda / priorities

✔ **High importance / high satisfaction**
showcases the institution's areas of strength that should be highlighted in promotional materials

✖ **Low importance / low satisfaction**
presents an opportunity for the institution to examine those areas that have low status with students

★ **Low importance / high satisfaction**
suggests areas from which it might be beneficial to redirect institutional resources to areas of higher importance



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## Scales: Three-Year Trends at Four-Year Private Institutions

| Scale | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Academic Advising** | | | |
| Importance | 6.30 | 6.30 | 6.32 |
| Satisfaction | 5.35 | 5.28 | 5.30 |
| Performance Gap | 0.95 | 1.02 | 1.02 |
| **Campus Climate** | | | |
| Importance | 6.17 | 6.16 | 6.18 |
| Satisfaction | 5.14 | 4.99 | 5.11 |
| Performance Gap | 1.03 | 1.17 | 1.07 |
| **Campus Life** | | | |
| Importance | 5.67 | 5.73 | 5.75 |
| Satisfaction | 4.70 | 4.61 | 4.74 |
| Performance Gap | 0.97 | 1.12 | 1.01 |
| **Campus Support Services** | | | |
| Importance | 5.99 | 6.03 | 6.04 |
| Satisfaction | 5.05 | 4.94 | 5.01 |
| Performance Gap | 0.94 | 1.09 | 1.03 |
| **Concern for Individual** | | | |
| Importance | 6.15 | 6.16 | 6.18 |
| Satisfaction | 5.17 | 5.05 | 5.14 |
| Performance Gap | 0.98 | 1.11 | 1.04 |
| **Instructional Effectiveness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.34 | 6.34 | 6.35 |
| Satisfaction | 5.33 | 5.22 | 5.27 |
| Performance Gap | 1.01 | 1.12 | 1.08 |
| **Recruitment and Financial Aid** | | | |
| Importance | 6.11 | 6.11 | 6.12 |
| Satisfaction | 4.89 | 4.73 | 4.85 |
| Performance Gap | 1.22 | 1.38 | 1.27 |
| **Registration Effectiveness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.11 | 6.12 | 6.13 |
| Satisfaction | 4.99 | 4.81 | 4.93 |
| Performance Gap | 1.12 | 1.31 | 1.20 |
| **Responsiveness to Diverse Populations** | | | |
| Importance | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfaction | 4.96 | 4.83 | 4.90 |
| Performance Gap | --- | --- | --- |
| **Safety and Security** | | | |
| Importance | 6.16 | 6.16 | 6.16 |
| Satisfaction | 4.61 | 4.48 | 4.60 |
| Performance Gap | 1.55 | 1.68 | 1.56 |
| **Service Excellence** | | | |
| Importance | 6.02 | 6.03 | 6.04 |
| Satisfaction | 4.99 | 4.86 | 4.96 |
| Performance Gap | 1.03 | 1.17 | 1.08 |
| **Student Centeredness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.19 | 6.16 | 6.20 |
| Satisfaction | 5.24 | 5.08 | 5.22 |
| Performance Gap | 0.95 | 1.08 | 0.98 |

Student Records: n = 29,103 for 1994-95; n = 38,201 for 1995-96; n = 41,326 for 1996-97

## Scales: Three-Year Trends at Four-Year Public Institutions

| Scale | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Academic Advising** | | | |
| Importance | 6.30 | 6.27 | 6.32 |
| Satisfaction | 5.01 | 4.93 | 4.94 |
| Performance Gap | 1.29 | 1.34 | 1.38 |
| **Campus Climate** | | | |
| Importance | 6.03 | 6.01 | 6.05 |
| Satisfaction | 4.82 | 4.97 | 4.73 |
| Performance Gap | 1.21 | 1.30 | 1.32 |
| **Campus Life** | | | |
| Importance | 5.43 | 5.50 | 5.56 |
| Satisfaction | 4.66 | 4.52 | 4.59 |
| Performance Gap | 0.77 | 0.98 | 0.97 |
| **Campus Support Services** | | | |
| Importance | 6.02 | 6.01 | 6.06 |
| Satisfaction | 4.99 | 4.84 | 4.85 |
| Performance Gap | 1.03 | 1.17 | 1.21 |
| **Concern for Individual** | | | |
| Importance | 6.03 | 6.04 | 6.07 |
| Satisfaction | 4.72 | 4.64 | 4.61 |
| Performance Gap | 1.31 | 1.40 | 1.46 |
| **Instructional Effectiveness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.30 | 6.29 | 6.32 |
| Satisfaction | 5.07 | 4.97 | 4.98 |
| Performance Gap | 1.23 | 1.32 | 1.34 |
| **Recruitment and Financial Aid** | | | |
| Importance | 5.97 | 5.96 | 6.02 |
| Satisfaction | 4.53 | 4.45 | 4.48 |
| Performance Gap | 1.44 | 1.51 | 1.54 |
| **Registration Effectiveness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.17 | 6.15 | 6.17 |
| Satisfaction | 4.76 | 4.63 | 4.67 |
| Performance Gap | 1.41 | 1.52 | 1.50 |
| **Responsiveness to Diverse Populations** | | | |
| Importance | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfaction | 5.01 | 4.84 | 4.81 |
| Performance Gap | --- | --- | --- |
| **Safety and Security** | | | |
| Importance | 6.24 | 6.27 | 6.28 |
| Satisfaction | 4.37 | 4.29 | 4.22 |
| Performance Gap | 1.87 | 1.98 | 2.06 |
| **Service Excellence** | | | |
| Importance | 5.98 | 5.96 | 6.00 |
| Satisfaction | 4.68 | 4.57 | 458 |
| Performance Gap | 1.30 | 1.39 | 1.42 |
| **Student Centeredness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.00 | 5.97 | 6.03 |
| Satisfaction | 4.85 | 4.72 | 4.75 |
| Performance Gap | 1.15 | 1.25 | 1.28 |

Student Records: n = 16,009 for 1994-95; n = 29,892 for 1995-96; n = 30,557 for 1996-97

## Scales: Three-Year Trends at Two-Year Institutions

| Scale | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Academic Advising/Counseling** | | | |
| Importance | 6.08 | 6.13 | 6.10 |
| Satisfaction | 5.10 | 5.05 | 5.03 |
| Performance Gap | 0.98 | 1.08 | 1.07 |
| **Academic Services** | | | |
| Importance | 5.99 | 6.02 | 6.01 |
| Satisfaction | 5.16 | 5.04 | 5.03 |
| Performance Gap | 0.83 | 0.98 | 0.98 |
| **Admissions and Financial Aid** | | | |
| Importance | 5.92 | 6.00 | 5.98 |
| Satisfaction | 4.94 | 4.93 | 4.91 |
| Performance Gap | 0.98 | 1.07 | 1.07 |
| **Campus Climate** | | | |
| Importance | 5.92 | 5.96 | 5.94 |
| Satisfaction | 5.12 | 5.08 | 5.09 |
| Performance Gap | 0.80 | 0.88 | 0.85 |
| **Campus Support Services** | | | |
| Importance | 5.31 | 5.42 | 5.43 |
| Satisfaction | 4.77 | 4.72 | 4.75 |
| Performance Gap | 0.54 | 0.70 | 0.68 |
| **Concern for the Individual** | | | |
| Importance | 6.07 | 6.11 | 6.08 |
| Satisfaction | 5.10 | 5.06 | 5.04 |
| Performance Gap | 0.97 | 1.05 | 1.04 |
| **Instructional Effectiveness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.17 | 6.20 | 6.17 |
| Satisfaction | 5.30 | 5.25 | 5.25 |
| Performance Gap | 0.87 | 0.95 | 0.92 |
| **Registration Effectiveness** | | | |
| Importance | 6.11 | 6.15 | 6.13 |
| Satisfaction | 5.27 | 5.23 | 5.23 |
| Performance Gap | 0.84 | 0.92 | 0.90 |
| **Responsiveness to Diverse Populations** | | | |
| Importance | --- | --- | --- |
| Satisfaction | 5.34 | 5.29 | 5.29 |
| Performance Gap | --- | --- | --- |
| **Safety and Security** | | | |
| Importance | 5.92 | 5.98 | 5.96 |
| Satisfaction | 4.77 | 4.64 | 4.73 |
| Performance Gap | 1.15 | 1.34 | 1.23 |
| **Service Excellence** | | | |
| Importance | 5.89 | 5.93 | 5.90 |
| Satisfaction | 5.06 | 5.02 | 5.01 |
| Performance Gap | 0.83 | 0.91 | 0.89 |
| **Student Centeredness** | | | |
| Importance | 5.91 | 5.95 | 5.93 |
| Satisfaction | 5.20 | 5.16 | 5.15 |
| Performance Gap | 0.71 | 0.79 | 0.78 |

Student Records: n = 17,121 for 1994-95; n = 30,122 for 1995-96; n = 40,629 for 1996-97

### Uses of Satisfaction Data

The primary uses of the Student Satisfaction Inventory results continue to be developing awareness and readying campuses for institutional planning. Some specific uses cited by the 524 institutions currently using the SSI are as follows:

- Setting retention agenda
- Providing feedback to faculty
- Marketing the institution
- Providing feedback to staff
- Strategic planning
- Providing feedback to students
- Preparing self-study for accreditation
- Influencing budget decisions
- Enhancing total quality management
- Pinpointing the specific expectations of different ethnic groups
- Targeting specific needs of on-campus residents vs. commuters
- Providing direction to individual departments/ majors/programs
- Determining the satisfaction levels of special populations, including nontraditional students, part-time students, and students with disabilities

Participating institutions report that a more complete view of their students' concerns enables them to achieve significant gains in their institution's effectiveness more quickly because they know precisely where—and where not—to focus their time, money, and effort. As many of these institutions have learned already, the results of the inventory serve as a blueprint for initiating change. The SSI data have allowed them to move ahead confidently, avoiding the mistake of relying on traditional, incomplete measures of student satisfaction.

### Reasons for Surveying Annually

To get the most value from student satisfaction studies requires that institutions compare their students' perceptions over time. Therefore, more and more institutions are making the decision to survey their students on an annual basis in order to provide systematic feedback to their internal and external constituents on the effectiveness of all campus programs and services.

In addition, institutions report their primary reasons for assessing student satisfaction annually include:

- Establish annual benchmarking of their student population
- Track the impact of new initiatives on student satisfaction
- Identify new areas for further improvement, based on the concerns of the current student body
- Track expectations of students as they progress through class levels
- Identify current strengths for recruitment activities

## Summary

Successful institutions tend to share three basic attributes: they focus on the needs of their students, they continually improve the quality of the educational experience, and they use student satisfaction assessment results to shape their future directions.

Making the decision to regularly assess student expectations and levels of satisfaction can provide institutions with the insurance policy they need to maintain their edge in the academic marketplace. Students whose needs are actively addressed by their institution are more likely to be successful in achieving their educational goals and more likely to persist — and ultimately become the institutions' best ambassadors and future benefactors.

### For more information:

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*The Student Satisfaction Inventory™ was developed by USA Group Noel-Levitz, Inc. in 1993 and is published by USA Group Noel-Levitz. The National Validation Study was completed in 1994. The authors are psychologists Laurie Schreiner, Ph.D., and Stephanie Juillerat, Ph.D.*



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